



Internet Society
Foundation

RESEARCH GRANT INFORMATION SESSION APRIL 2024

Internet Society Foundation Research Funding Information Session

April 11, 2024

Innocent Adriko: All right. Good morning. Good afternoon. Good evening. My name is Innocent Adriko, and I am a program coordinator at the Internet Society Foundation. Welcome to our second research information session.. I'll be handing over to Maiko and my colleagues here. Thank you.

Maiko Nakagaki: Thank you, Innocent. Good morning, good afternoon, good evening. Thank you so much for joining this info session today. My name is Maiko Nakagaki and I'm a senior program officer here at the Internet Society Foundation overlooking the research program and I am coming from the US and Boston area. And then I will hand it over to Upasana.

Upasana Hembram: Thanks, Maiko. Thanks, Innocent. Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining in for today's info session. My name is Upasana Hembram, I am dialing in from Hyderabad, India, and I am an associate program officer at the Internet Society Foundation, mainly helping manage the research grant portfolio.

So, let's get started with today's session. I would just like to walk you through today's agenda. So we'll do a quick round of introductions, talk to you a little bit about what the Internet Society Foundation does, and what Internet Society does, and moving on from

there, we'll give you a brief overview of what the research program entails, and we'll dive a little bit deeper into understanding what exactly are the objectives of this research program, which I think can help your application, and then we'll also move on and speak a little bit about the areas of focus that we are currently supporting to the research grant, and then we'll talk a little bit about the eligibility criteria for applicants, and then open up the floor for some Q&A.

So, for those of you who are familiar or not familiar with the Internet Society Foundation, we essentially work closely with Internet Society and work towards advancing their mission and vision, which is that the Internet is for Everyone. The way we do that at the Internet Society Foundation is by funding initiatives that either strengthen the Internet in its function, or strengthen its reach so that it can effectively serve communities, and the initiatives that we usually support are the ones that support efforts towards making sure that the Internet is open, trustworthy, secure, and globally connected.

Now, a little bit about the research program. As you all may know, the research program's call for proposals was launched on April 2nd and the application window will be open till 14th of May 2100 UTC.

Currently, we are funding two different categories of applicants. The first one is research organizations and institutions, this also includes public universities, and they can apply for funding for up to 500,000 US dollars. And the second category is that of independent researchers, which are usually individuals, and they may apply for up to 200,000 US dollars. The maximum duration for that the research grant can support a project for is 24 months or two years. And in terms of some eligibility criteria, for institutions we can support organizations that are US 501(c)3 or equivalent organizations. And the other important criteria for organizations is that their mission needs to be aligned with the Internet Society's mission.

Maiko will be speaking a little bit more in depth about some of these criteria. And for independent researchers, we usually look for applicants who have post grad degree and some kind of demonstrated ability of performing research. So you may attach any like peer reviewed publication any or any other publications that you may have had within academia or other research forums.

Over to you, Maiko.

Maiko Nakagaki: Thank you, Upasana. One point I wanted to clarify that Upasana raised was that, so the Internet Society Foundation is a supporting organization of Internet Society, and so to that extent, we are legally bound to support grantees who are aligned with the mission and what the Internet Society does, so I just wanted to make a note that in addition to public universities, we do indeed support eligible non profit organizations to apply to our program, but that organization must have activities and overall mission that is aligned with these seven points that are described here.

And that is because we can only provide support to organizations that, again, have similar vision and mission as Internet Society. So, what does that mean? Specifically, we're looking for organizations whose main mission is around working with the Internet, rather, that's doing research and education around the Internet infrastructure, promoting educational applications of the Internet, building connectivity or expanding connectivity, so that people have Internet, who do research and policy advocacy around Internet development and so forth.

So I highly encourage you to take a look at this list and study it and make sure that you are indeed aligned. Moving forward I wanted to describe more about the research program itself. So our research program has three main objectives. One is that we like to support a research that is new and novel and it's methodology and approach pertaining to solutions to solve the challenges that the Internet is facing today.

Second, we look for proposals that is collaborative, in terms of we look for proposals that want to work with other researchers from different regions, or from different countries, perhaps, or with researchers across perhaps different disciplines. We think that collaborative research is a very strong way to make a very... I guess it comes down to another point that I'll be raising this... around intersectional research. We think we want to support collaboration because we think that that will lead to intersectional approach to solving solutions.

And then, lastly, we also like to see research that is applied, in terms of, you know, there are many funders out there who support purely the scientific aspect of research, and, you know, doing the actual study itself and that's it. But, we are actually interested in more than that. We would love to support research proposals that go beyond just producing the research, but the so what to the impact part.

So, if your research plan is to conduct policy advocacy based on the findings you have, or the recommendations or your research plan is to convene stakeholders from private sector and industries to talk about how various products that they are producing may have challenges, and, you know, you've found out solutions from your research, that type of approach is something that we would love to see.

For this year, just as in the past few years, we are going to accept proposals in four focus areas. So, the themes of your research must be fitting into one of these categories. The first is around Greening the Internet, so it is about making sure that the environmental footprint and sustainability of the Internet is taken into consideration.

The second is around Digital Economy, and looking at how the various markets have played a role because of the Internet expansion and what kind of challenges have been arose and have arisen because of the vast popularity of going online.

The third focus area we look for is Trustworthiness. So, this topic really looks at the user experience and expectations of the Internet and how they are being met, or not, by the people who are behind creating the Internet ecosystem.

And then the last category that we support is Decolonizing the Internet. This is coming from our view that the Internet has been developed by a select few in the the Global North countries in the past. We want to support research that looks at how we can challenge the status quo and expand the Internet to include those who are left behind and who are marginalized currently in these discussions.

The last slide we have for you today is around describing how we will examine the proposal that you submit. We invite external reviewers so that we can get independent judgment of what you submit, and these independent reviewers are all academics or practitioners who have an Internet research background, and they will be looking at your proposals from these five main points. One, is the research in line with one of our thematic areas that I just mentioned? Two, is the research methodology and the question that you're trying to answer, is it novel? Third, is the proposal and the research that you will be conducting, is it applied, and is it something that can inform decision makers? Fourth, is the research collaborative, and if so, how? And then, lastly, we will be looking at if your research is indeed intersectional in its approach, as in, if your research proposal is looking at issues of environment, is it also looking at the intersection of environment and gender, for instance, or environment and other marginalized communities? Those are some things that we will be considering as we read your proposals.

And so, now we will open up the floor for questions for us. Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much, Maiko. So, please raise up your hand if you have a question. I guess we have Erick. Erick, you can go first.

Erick Samindu: Thank you. My name is Erick. Currently, I'm dialing in from Rwanda. I have a question based on the eligibility. So, you say, like, for instance, institutions. The public, I mean like the universities, but also nonprofit organizations, but to give us a criteria 501(c)3 I don't know if we can get more information about that, or if there is a site so that we can go and see what kind of institution, so that we know that the institution that we are from, also meet the criteria of this 501(c)3.

If there is a site you can share, that would be very helpful. Thank you.

Maiko Nakagaki: Sure, I can take that. Yes, 501(c)3 is a legal designation in the US, so if you are indeed a nonprofit from another country, you will be asked to submit your articles of incorporation and other governing documents from your own country, that can prove your legal identity as a charity. And then we hire a third party vendor who does the legal assessment of if your organization is equivalent to a non profit 501(c)3 in

the US or not. So, that description is detailed in that website that I just shared in our chats.

Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: All right. Thank you so much, Maiko. Forgive me if I pronounce your names wrongly. I'm not so good at names. Fabrice, if you could go next.

Fabrice TEUGUIA: Okay. Thank you. Good afternoon to everybody. My name is Fabrice and then I have two questions. The first one is about the project. If ISOC is able to take a project that has started, it means that I and my team, we have started some project and then is it possible to have some grant from ISOC for one of those projects? That's the first question.

Then the second one is about the areas. You have given us something like four areas, then this is just global items. So, if I want to go specifically, you know, we are able to join many technologies on each of these terms. Let me take something like digital economy. Digital economy can go to something like project on diverse areas like agriculture. Any, anyway, many, many, many, many area talking about digital economy. So if we are just finding, if we are just working on the project like. agricultural in a way digital economy to improve agricultural techniques or agricultural methodologies, something like that.

You think this kind of idea could go in a project?

Upasana Hembram: I can take that. I would say yes. I agree that the thematic area that we have around Internet economy is quite broad. But if As per our understanding of what comprises under Internet or digital economy is looking at issues of how things have changed due to Internet's presence or in the growing digital age.

So I can't comment exactly about whether or not your current project would fit into that thematic area, but yes, as long as it is trying to answer some of the larger questions around digital economy then yes, it could fit. I would also say to look at some of the other selection criteria that we shared in the slides, and I think that will also help you make a better judgment of whether or not your proposal fits for the research grant program.

And your first question, I'm not sure if I understood correctly, is it that you have an existing project and you want funds for that? Is that something you can apply for? Okay so, if it's a research question that does not already have funding, and in order to explore that particular line of research you need additional funds, then yes, we can support it, or we can consider it under the research grant program.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much, Upasana. I'll take a question from the chat: How competitive is the grant?

Upasana Hembram: Competitive? Yeah, I would say it is fairly competitive. We receive a large volume of applications and given that this year we have 4.5 million US dollars, the number of proposals that we can actually fund is far fewer compared to the application volume that we receive.

So, I would say it's fairly competitive.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much. So, I'll take a question from Aishrawiya. Aishrawiya, did I pronounce that correctly? Please go ahead.

Aishrawiya Giridhar: Hi, sorry, it's Aishrawiya. Hi, thanks so much for organizing the session. I have a couple of different questions. So one is, I know that essentially the grant application is for a period of two years, up to two years. I'm wondering how much detail we'll have to provide in the application on how we plan this, on the timelines basically for the project, and whether that's something that we need to get into on a fairly detailed like month by month basis, or if a broad overview of what we intend to do would be enough?

Also, on the question of partnering with other organizations, is this more in the sense of applying for the grant together or? I'm curious about whether this would involve, for example, working with an organization in conducting the research, so what would be better for the application?

Also, just, I'm clarifying that essentially the grant is premised also on doing some kind of primary research.

Upasana Hembram: Okay, so your first question was around level of detail, so that is at your discretion. Honestly, within Fluxx, if you look at the application, there is a template available for budget and work plan, so, in the work plan, you can attach a list of activities and the duration that you would like to do those activities for, so it's up to you how much detail you want to share, but I would say at least the key or, like, major activities that you plan on conducting through the research, to give some amount of detail around that.

And the second question was around collaboration. In the Fluxx application you can apply as only one organization, so you will have to have a primary applicant, and usually you list the other people that you are partnering with as collaborators in your application or proposal. The other method that you could also do is a sub-granting method, if you would want to list your partners as maybe somebody that you are sub-granting. Those are the two options, but we need one primary applicant for the grant. It's just easier to administer funds to one organization.

And your third question was around primary research. By primary research you mean like data collection? Yeah, there is quite a bit of primary research involved across all our

grantees, so even though it's not a rigid criteria that we have specified, it's what we've seen across our current grantees.

Aishrawiya Giridhar: Thanks so much.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much. So I'll give the floor to Amilas.

Ro Amillas Tiseyra: Thank you so much, Innocent, Maiko, and Upasana. This has been very informative. I have just one question because you've answered all the other ones so far, which is wonderful.

Can an organization apply more than one time, but for different foci that you have mentioned? Thank you so much.

Maiko Nakagaki: Yes, we have received multiple applications from the same organization before, so you can pursue that, yes.

Innocent Adriko: All right. There's a question from the chat. It was from Edith, and it's in Spanish. I think they're asking whether they can make a proposal in Spanish.

Maiko Nakagaki: Yes, we are accepting applications both in English, French, and Spanish, so indeed feel free to submit them in your native language. I will note a caveat that, if you are selected for the proposal, our team unfortunately do not have all of those language skills, so if you are indeed selected, we may have to work out a way to work together in terms of communicating and grant reporting and so forth.

But, during this proposal phase, we are accepting applications in all languages. Yes.

Innocent Adriko: Thanks so much, Maiko. Alexandra, I think you sent in a question. Could you just take the floor and ask the question? Thank you. You're next.

Alexandra Toledo: Sure, thanks so much. My question was back to mission alignment.

Our organization as a nonprofit has the 501(c)3 equivalency determination, but in terms of the mission alignment, can the Internet be one element of the organization's activities in the context of this proposal? So, our work is broader than just the Internet. It's not specifically included in our mission statement.

So, just curious about that requirement.

Maiko Nakagaki: Sure. Yeah, I can take that question up. Ultimately the decision about eligibility is determined by our legal department and not us, but if your mission and, let's say, your articles of incorporation and, like, overall activities do heavily focus more

on working with the digital Internet ecosystem, then I believe you will be more aligned and likely to pass, but let's say if your mission is very broad, like food security, and then you have programs around using digital payments and so forth, then you probably would not pass.

But there are ways to go about that. On our grantee eligibility website we do talk about using fiscal sponsors. If your organization does not meet that criteria, we would encourage you to look for potential fiscal sponsors, or partner with an organization who would have the mission alignment itself. Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much, Maiko. Salam, you can go ahead.

Salam Khan: Okay. Thank you. I have a question about the criteria. There are two criteria, as you mentioned, Organization and individual, so my question is that if the individual is a single person, or group of persons, can apply for a particular project or research project, something like that?

Upasana Hembram: Yes, you can have collaborators, but the primary applicant would have to be ideally somebody who is the principal investigator of the research project, and you may list the other people as collaborators. In the Fluxx application, we do have a section for applicants to list out the various people or organizations that they are collaborating with, so you can list your partners there.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much, Upasana. I'll take yes, Aluwang?

Tagang Aluwong: Hello, good afternoon, sir.

Innocent Adriko: Yes, good afternoon.

Tagang Aluwong: My department, we've been working to solve problems of heat stress umbrella chickens, and we've published a lot in highly impact journals. Out of the four categories of research listed, bringing the Internet, digital economy, trustworthiness, Internet, I don't know which area does livestock research fall in. Thank you.

Upasana Hembram: Sure. It's kind of hard to answer that question, because it will have to have an element of studying Internet related challenges, and I think livestock research is too broad. So, at this moment, we can't really say which thematic area it is, but if it does not have a component of studying Internet, just generally any challenges or creating evidence related to Internet, then it may not be a fit for the research grant program.

Tagang Aluwong: Actually, our work has been on oxidative stress, using novel antioxidants in mitigating oxidative stress in livestock.

Maiko Nakagaki: So, all of our research does need to have a component of how the Internet is involved. I would encourage you to think about how what you're proposing intersects with the Internet ecosystem. Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much. There's a question on the chat. What's the timeline for the selection process and grant period like?

Upasana Hembram: We have a couple of stages for the review process, which includes legal review process as well as an external review process, and, because of the multiple stages, I would say it can take up to two to three months for us to make a decision, and I think there are always some complications around like legalities, and just other administrative complications sometimes, which make it difficult for us to be able to finalize a result about whether or not we can even legally administer funds to a certain organization.

So yeah, I would say three months timeline from application deadline is when you will hear from us.

Innocent Adriko: Mohamed, you can go on.

Mohamed Alimamy Fofanah: Hello, good afternoon. I'm Mohamed, I'm calling from Carnegie Mellon University Africa. I'm working as a research associate for the university. I'm currently working on a project called rural connectivity, and the essence of the project is to deploy an opportunistic connectivity network to provide communication opportunity to rural communities. As we all know, the rural communities, some parts in Africa, are challenged in terms of infrastructure, network connectivity, so, we are trying to develop a network system that's able to provide connectivity for those challenged communities. I don't know if certain projects, we can be able to integrate it as part of a proposal, to be able to work on your own projects, so I just want to get an overview on that, looking at what we are working on, because, as I said, we are working for the rural communities to be able to provide connectivity for them in those areas, so I don't know if those kind of projects can be fit with your proposal you're asking for.

Thank you.

Upasana Hembram: Thank you, Mohamed. So, your project sounds more like an execution or implementation heavy project, which might be better fit for some of our other programs at the ISOC Foundation. Since this is the research grant, we do look for a research component in your proposal, and we look for maybe testing of a hypothesis or building certain evidence something that addresses a gap in the field of Internet research or studies.

Mohamed Alimamy Fofanah: Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: Thank you so much, Upasana.

Alexandra, you have your hand up, so please take the floor.

Alexandra Toledo: Thanks. Since no one else has more questions, I have two. First is just to understand that the call is global, there's no geographic focus for this call? And then the second is, I understand the time frame is two years, is this something that then could be renewed after that, or is this a one time opportunity?

Upasana Hembram: Yes. The call is global. We don't have any limitations on geography for applicants as of now, and to answer your second question, based on, if selected, how you perform with the first grant, if you're able to accomplish everything that you set out to do, and perhaps even more, then we do have a process where we chat about renewing the grant.

That process looks slightly different, but it is highly contingent on what you've been able to accomplish with the first grant that you received.

Alexandra Toledo: Great. Thank you.

Innocent Adriko: All right. Thank you so much, Upasana. So, any other question? Just in case you have any other question, please, this is the time. Otherwise thank you so much for joining us today during this info session.

Have a nice day, evening, and morning, depending on where you've joined us from.

Goodbye.

Maiko Nakagaki: Thank you.